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Before the Dutch: 16th century Portuguese porcelain imports

Mittwoch, den 01. Juni 22, 18:00 Uhr c.t.
Raum A014, Hauptgebäude
Geschwister-Scholl-Platz 1

This talk discusses the reception and consumption of Chinese porcelain in Renaissance Iberia following the establishment of the Cape Route in 1497–9. It will show that by the mid-sixteenth century Chinese porcelain was already an inexpensive luxury to the upper and middle-upper segments of the urban population, who used these wares on a daily basis. This conclusion is largely based on Portuguese archival sources and data taken from archaeological excavations conducted in Portugal and former Portuguese Morocco. However, higher availability and affordability did not imply homogeneous consumption behaviour regarding Chinese porcelain.

This talk offers an innovative view of a topic that has been chiefly analysed from an Anglo-Dutch historiographic perspective, too heavily dependent on VOC's archives and on an Anglo-Dutch bias against the Iberian Catholic empires. It also contributes to enriching the debate about globalisation and consumption of overseas cultural goods in Europe during the early modern era, emphasizing the asynchrony and diversity of local responses. Finally, it offers new data on the formation of the first porcelain cabinets in Europe, which began to be developed during the second half of the sixteenth-century by female members of Iberian royalty and high aristocracy.

